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REV. DR. STORRS'S SERMON
AT THE
ORDINATION OF THE
REV. WILLIAM R. CHAPMAN.

1841

The day of small things.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM R. CHAPMAN,

OVER THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

OF GARDEN STREET CHAPEL, BOSTON,

SEPTEMBER 8, 1841.

BY RICHARD S. STORRS, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH, BRAINTREE.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY ISAAC KNAPP.
1841.

Boston, September 12, 1841.

REV. DR. STORRS :

DEAR SIR,—The Garden Street Church listened, with gratified feelings, to your very able and appropriate Sermon at the Ordination of MR. WILLIAM R. CHAPMAN, and request a copy for publication.

Very respectfully, Yours,

NATHL. ROGERS,
HENRY BLODGETT, } COMMITTEE
JOHN S. KIMBALL, } OF THE CHURCH.

GENTLEMEN :

The Sermon to which you so kindly refer, though necessarily prepared in haste, is cheerfully submitted to your disposal, in the hope that the simple truth it aims to illustrate may always animate your self-denying labors in the cause of our common salvation.

Yours, in the bonds of love,

R. S. STORRS.

BRAINTREE, Sept 14, 1841.

SERMON.

ZECHARIAH IV: 10.

FOR WHO HATH DESPISED THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS?

SEVENTY years from the carrying away of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus ascended the throne of Babylon, and issued a proclamation, giving them liberty, and encouragement to return to their own land, and rebuild their city and temple. It was an act of princely magnanimity. Comparatively few, however, availed themselves of the privilege. They had planted vineyards and olive yards in the land of their captivity. They had become reconciled in their feelings, and assimilated in their habits, to their conquerors, and had little disposition to encounter the privations and toils incident to a return to Judea. Ease and indulgence plead for their continued residence in Chaldea; religion and patriotism prevailed with forty two thousand only, to follow the priests and the princes back to the land of their fathers. "It was a day of small things."

They proceeded to build the altar of the God of Israel, and offer their sacrifices thereon, morning and evening. They laid the foundations of the temple, and set the priests in their apparel, with trumpets, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David. But their resources were limited—their strength was feebleness—their courage faintness—their enemies were many, and their friends few and fearful. Some shouted aloud for joy; but the ancient men who had seen the glory of the first house, wept with a loud voice, while they saw the foundations of the second laid; For, "It was a day of small things." And then, the adversaries of Judah weak-

ened the hands of the people. They insidiously proposed to become their fellow laborers. They hired counsellors against them at the court of Cyrus. And, at a later period, they tabled charges of treachery and rebellion against them; till at length, for sixteen years, the work was made to cease, by the decree of Ahasuerus, surreptitiously obtained. Truly, "it was a day of small things." But, it was not a day to be despised. What though Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions, like Sanballat and Tobiah afterwards, said one to another, "What do these feeble Jews? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish that are burned, and make an end in a day? Even that which they build, if a fox go up he shall even break down their stone wall." They but spake in character. They abhorred the offering of the Lord, and loved the licentiousness of idolatry.

But contempt of these feeble beginnings became not the Jew. He had been hewn out of the rock, and taken from the hole of the pit. He had been followed by the care of a special Providence, from the days of Abraham onward, and could trace the leading hand of God, distinctly, in the most trying exigences, delivering him from all that had risen up against him. In "the day of small things," was the foundation laid of all the glory that had encircled the house of his fathers! Surely, it became not him to "despise the day of small things."

From the grain of mustard seed springs the tree, in whose branches the birds of the air build their nests. By a little leaven, three measures of meal are leavened. From the rain drop springs the meandering rill, and from the rill the majestic stream that bears away the produce of a continent to feed the millions of other lands; and a single spark gives rise to the devouring flame that enwraps the habitations, the temples, the collected wealth and the splendid monuments of the crowded city. Nay, the rise and fall of empires—the regeneration and destruction of the world—all stand connected with "the day small things." Who, then, shall despise it? It is such a day as God hath chosen for the commencement of those mighty works whose influences stretch onward through all time—

unfolding the glories of his character, and accomplishing the high purposes of his love, toward the myriads that surround his throne forever. I know not how to improve this occasion better, than by expanding this thought, and endeavoring to fasten it on every mind, by familiar illustrations drawn,

I. FROM THE WORKINGS OF CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

II. FROM THE MOVEMENTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

III. FROM THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I. From the workings of Christian benevolence.

Various as these are, it will not be possible, and it is not necessary, to go into an extensive enumeration of them. The most obvious and important of them all is,

1. PRAYER. But, how small a thing is prayer!—"the burden of a sigh—the falling of a tear—the upward glancing of an eye, when none but God is near!" Was it not a "day of small things" with Jacob, when through fear of an injured brother's fell revenge, he divided his family and his flocks into two bands, and sent them trembling over Jabbok, while, apart and alone, he wrestled all night with the Angel of the covenant? But he prevailed, and the sun rose upon him a conqueror over Esau and his four hundred men—an acknowledged heir to the possessions of his fathers, in the promised land!

Those were "days of small things" to Elijah, when the royal court of Israel sought his life, and he was compelled to hide himself by the brook Cherith, and receive his food from ravens—and when he sat under the juniper tree, begging that he might die—and when he took refuge in Horeb, and passed forty days without food; but they were days of prayer—succeeded by days of triumph; for while the wicked perished, and the enemies of the Lord consumed away into smoke as the fat of lambs, horses of fire and chariots of fire bore him upwards to his father's house, where cherubim and seraphim bade him welcome. Daniel too, saw "the day of small things," when contending at fearful odds with the king and nobles of Babylon, for the honor of his God and liberty of conscience—and when the spirit of persecution raged the

more furiously, in proportion as he maintained his integrity, the more firmly—and threatening and violence met him on every side; but the God whom he served forsook him not—and humble trust, with persevering prayer, secured his deliverance from the lion's den, and the continuance of his life down to the day of Israel's redemption. It was a "day of small things" with the infant church at Jerusalem, when James was slain, and Peter imprisoned, and the disciples scattered abroad by the terrors of a malignant persecution; but then it was, that a little company gathered together for prayer, in the house of John's mother; and the Lord heard their supplications—sent his angel—delivered Peter—slew the murderous Herod—gave his people rest, and multiplied their numbers beyond former precedent.

The promise is unchangeable. "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer." Days of darkness and distress have often come over Zion—the "day of trouble and of treading down, and of perplexity," that has "called to weeping, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth;" but when the Lord has been sought unto, he has risen up as in mount Perazim, and poured out his wrath as in the valley of Gibeon, and shown himself strong in behalf of his people, making one to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight. Have they resolved, in view of their weakness, to give him no rest? He has returned and looked down from heaven, and beheld, and visited the vine that he has planted—he has revived his work in the midst of the years—he has built the wall of Jerusalem even in troublous times; clothed her priests with salvation, and caused his saints to shout aloud for joy. Never, then, let the day of small things be despised; above all others, it is that which God hath chosen to make his power known, in answer to the importunate prayers of his afflicted people. Moreover, there is

2. 'THE DAILY CONVERSATION OF BELIEVERS. In this, I include whatever pertains to the familiar intercourse of christians with their fellow men—their virtuous example—their pious instruction—their earnest exhortations—their affectionate appeals to conscience—their zeal in the diffusion of religious

knowledge, whether by the tongue or the press, the tract or the Sabbath school.

It must be conceded, that "the foolishness of preaching" is the grand instrumentality ordained of heaven, for the conversion of men, and Zion's enlargement; but subordinate means to the same end are not less clearly specified, nor less necessary. What mean injunctions like these, addressed to all believers—"Let your light shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your father who is in heaven!" "They that understand among the people, shall instruct many." "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "Warn them that are unruly—comfort the feeble minded"—"in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and suffer not sin upon him." "Be not weary in well-doing." To the eye of sense and reason, means like these may seem small and inefficient. In the spirit of Sanballat, it is asked, "What do these feeble disciples"—"these weak brethren"—"these unlearned and ignorant men!" as the "feeble Jews," amid all their embarrassment, could build the walls of Jerusalem faster than Sanballat, with all his strength, could pull them down—so the faithful disciples of Jesus, however few in numbers, and weak in intellect, are able to cope with the most energetic of Zion's enemies. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his strength." Peter and John, unlearned as they were, confounded the whole Jewish Sanhedrim—subdued the prejudices, and inspired the penitence and love of thousands, whom all the learning and power of the established priesthood could not affect. So it is with the meek and unambitious, but devoted christian, always. God honors his zeal. He rewards his fidelity. By weak things he confounds the mighty. By things that are not, he brings to naught things that are.

It may be a day of small things, when the humble christian, with the love of Christ in his heart—and the word of exhortation on his tongue, and the little tract in his hand, goes abroad to encounter the Goliath of error and vice—and enters the mansion of the rich, or the palace of the noble, to se-

cure some trophy of victorious grace! It may be a day of small things, when some humble female enters the abode of squalid poverty and loathsome vice, to pick up from the rubbish, and polish a single gem as an ornament of the Redeemer's future crown! It may be a day of small things, when a Sabbath school teacher threads the lanes and alleys of the city, and penetrates the haunts of iniquity, to find out the neglected child and place him under the sound of glad tidings from heaven! But is it a day to be despised? Glory, honor and immortality succeed it. The victims of sin are rescued. The devices of Satan are foiled. The counsels of Eternal Love are accomplished. The alleluias of heaven rise to a louder note. Angels rejoice over sinners saved.

Depend upon it—it is not the eloquent tongue, so much as the warm heart—nor the mass of learning, so much as fervent piety—nor refinement of manners, so much as godly simplicity, that wins the sinner to the love of Christ. The logic of the philosophical christian may overthrow the arguments of the unbeliever, but he remains an unbeliever still. The eloquence of the christian orator may arouse the thoughtless man from his stupor, and draw out the errorist from his refuge of lies—but, the occasion passed, indifference returns, and the castle of error is barred more firmly than ever. It is the simple hearted confidence—the unassumed earnestness—the unaffected self-denial, the unostentatious but fervid zeal of the christian, whether in the higher or lower walks of life, that subdues the lofty tone of the unbeliever's spirit, and brings the daring transgressor, a trembling penitent, to the foot of the Cross. Who, then, shall “despise the day of small things?”

3. EFFORTS FOR THE WORLD'S CONVERSION. This is an object which christian benevolence pursues with steady eye and unfaltering step. The injunction of the ascending Redeemer can no longer be disregarded; the gospel must be preached to every creature.

Is it still a “day of small things”? True! and if we compare what is now doing, with what remains to be done, before “all men shall know the Lord,” we are overwhelmed with convictions of the slothfulness and inefficiency of Zion. For if all the pecuniary sacrifices, of all christian nations, for the

conversion of the world, be counted up, they reach not one tenth of the annual revenue of some of the feeblér christian Governments. And yet, within the last fifty years, more has been done, in the true spirit of christian missions, than for fifteen hundred previous years. It is a day, therefore, not to be despised.

Without pretending to precise accuracy of statement, let me say, that there are not far from one hundred mission stations already formed on heathen ground—nor less than a thousand ordained missionaries proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ in heathen ears, beside a still larger number of assistant missionaries, and some thousands of native helpers, who are conducting schools, and in various ways diffusing the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. There too, are christian churches established, at various and distant points, embracing not fewer members than all the congregational churches of New England; and hundreds of thousands of heathen children and adults, crowd the mission schools. Numerous seminaries of a high order are established. Scores of printing presses are in operation. A million of pagans have nominally renounced idolatry, and are inquiring the way to heaven! And is even such a day to be despised? Ask, if you will, with the incredulous disciples of old,—“What are these among so many?”—and I answer, He that could feed five thousand men, beside women and children, with five barley loaves, will render these small means and small successes instrumental of that glorious renovation, that will one day call forth the announcement—“The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms Christ.”

And, besides all this, let not the fresh triumphs of the Cross within the limits of christendom, be overlooked. Churches are multiplying here—and pastors and teachers arise to feed them with the bread of life—the old wastes are recovered, new fields are occupied, and new congregations organized, and domestic missionaries by thousands are “giving songs in the night” to the sons and daughters of affliction. Societies, by thousands, have been formed to give the oracles of God to all nations; and millions on millions of the incorruptible

Word have been thrown into the hands of men speaking more than one hundred and fifty languages;—and tracts, by hundreds of millions, have gone forth at the same time, like herald angels with glad voice, in the lonely desert to proclaim—

“Prepare the way! a God, a God appears!

* * * *

Hear him ye deaf, and all ye blind, behold!

A little while ago, and the world slept. Now, it wakes. Its eyes, indeed, are not yet half opened. But when we bring, side by side, the days in which we live, and those when Elliot, Brainard, and Schwartz labored—or those when Hall, Mills, and Richards prayed the Foreign Mission Board of our own country into existence under the shadow of college walls—or those when the poor Welch clergyman first breathed the breath of life into the British and Foreign Bible Society—or when Robert Raikes set on foot his plan of benevolence at Gloucester, and said, like his Lord and Master, “Suffer little children to come unto me”—which of those days will ye despise? In all of them, christian benevolence has wrought with her own hand, and brought forth results in which heaven rejoices. The “upper chamber,” perfumed with the incense of prayer, has sent forth an influence strong enough to break a monarch’s sceptre, and deliver an enthralled church from her chains. The solitary cell, tenanted by a monk and a Bible, has poured forth a radiance that disclosed the mystery of iniquity, and shook the throne of the Man of Sin, and wrested from him half his dominions.

“Despise not the day of small things.” Not one prayer of faith will be lost. Not one faithful admonition will fall like water to the ground. Not one effort in the cause of benevolence will be in vain. Results may not be seen at once, and should not all time disclose them fully, eternity will. The faithful parent—the prayerful friend—the solitary christian—the feeble church—the laborious pastor, who weeps between the porch and the altar, crying, “Spare thy people, O Lord”—should never yield to discouragement. Days and years may

pass away—a thousand sorrows may intervene, and a thousand fond expectations may be dashed— but,

“ Though seed lie buried long in dust,
It shan’t deceive our hope ;
The precious grain can ne’er be lost,
For grace insures the crop.”

We are to illustrate the same point,

II. From the movements of Divine Providence.

I now refer to events, not contemplated by men, not brought about by any direct agency of theirs—but events accomplished contrary to human calculations, by an agency proceeding directly from the throne of God.

In the family of Jacob is a lovely, unsuspecting, and devout youth—the object of his brethren’s envy, the favorite of heaven. The throne of Egypt is before him. Prostrate millions shall hail him as their deliverer from famine and death ! But dark is the way that leads to this elevation. Treachery and violence tear him from the protection of his father’s arm. Cupidity throws him a slave into the hands of the sons of Ishmael—and then into the hands of a servant of Pharaoh. Temptations meet him there, and prison walls confine him. Virtue weeps in solitude, and pours the prayer of faith into the ear of Heaven. But now, the angel of deliverance comes. The dungeon yields up its victim—he rises to the destined seat of power, and pours a full tide of blessing over Egypt and Canaan. Were not the days of Joseph’s trial, days of “ small things,” to the man of faith and hope ? Were not the consolations of God, temporarily few ? But, such as they were, he despised them not, held fast his integrity, and reaped its full reward.

An infant is born in Egypt. An edict of the king demands its life. Maternal love conceals the unconscious babe, till concealment is no longer possible. The same love prepares the bulrush ark, and deposits it on the river’s brink, where the serpent and the crocodile seek their prey, and there watches the precious treasure :—a stranger female approaches. It is the king’s daughter ! Has she a heart like her father ? Will

she strangle that child, and plunge it into the dark rolling stream? No! God is there. The heart of the princess is in his hand. She eyes the babe. It weeps. She presses it to her bosom. It is hers. That babe it is, that afterwards leads Israel from the house of bondage—opens their way through the red sea—averts from them the oft kindled wrath of heaven, and conducts them to the borders of Canaan! Tell me, was not the infancy of Moses a “day of small things”? But his maturity was a day of splendor, that made Egypt quake, emancipated three millions of slaves, and affected the destinies of the world.

In a distant province of Persia, there dwells a little orphan girl. Her uncle receives and educates her as his own; and anticipates, perhaps, that when his locks shall be silvered o’er with age, this tender orphan will repay his cares with filial duties. Further, neither his thoughts nor wishes go. But now, a decree goes forth from Shushan, to gather into the presence of the king all the fairest daughters of the land, that from among them he may select one to share the honors of his throne. The orphan girl is among them. Her modesty and worth secure the monarch’s favor—his heart and hand are her’s.

But ambition and villany meditate the destruction of the Jews throughout the empire. An order of proscription is obtained, with the royal signature. The day is appointed. The posts are sent out in all haste; and everywhere preparations are made to cut off, at a stroke, a whole unoffending, but dependant people. And what shall save them? The little orphan girl calls on her God—throws herself unbidden at the feet of her husband—obtains a revocation of the bloody edict—saves her early friend from death, her people from ruin, her prince from the guilt of blood—and the church of God from extinction. It was a “day of small things” to Esther, when an orphan, in her uncle’s house, she discharged her humble duties with faithfulness, trusting in God, and looked for no higher sphere of action—but, how glorious the day that succeeded it!

It was a “day of small things” when Julian ascended the imperial throne of Rome, and took away from the church her

ministers and ordinances—shut up her schools—installed paganism in christian temples—made priests of the lowest of the people, and poured forth the gall of his heart through the pen and the sword, against the object of his hate. But, to accomplish his whole purpose, the power of Persia must first be broken. War is declared—his armies are pushed forward, every fortification in his way is reduced—the capital is besieged, and all terms of reconciliation declined. The city is ready to surrender—a single day, and his triumph is complete! At that moment, Heaven infatuates him—he orders his fleet to be burned—the seige to be raised—the army to be put in motion, and directed to Constantinople. In his march through the desert, he is deceived by his guides—harassed by the enemy—abandoned by his forces—slain, in the prime of his days, by the arrow of a Persian—and the vacant throne is again occupied by a friend to the church. And, now, Zion arises and puts on her beautiful garments; pagan superstitions vanish away, and the Lord causeth the wrath of man to praise him, and restrains the remainder of his wrath.

It was a “day of small things” when our Puritan fathers left the shores of England, and slowly ploughed their way across the deep, to find a refuge from the intolerance of civil and ecclesiastical domination. Little remained to them, but an unsubdued spirit of Christian liberty. And even that was reduced to a single spark, that had well nigh been extinguished by the flood of waters issuing from the mouth of the dragon, or the less dreaded waters of the stormy ocean. But it lived; and it kindled up a hallowed flame on the sea-girt coast of New England, which has moved steadily onward, till it has reached the shores of the Pacific, and even thrown its light beyond, where it dissipates the darkness which for centuries untold, has brooded over the islands of Oceanica. The briars and the thorns, with the strong oaks of Bashan, and the vines of Sodom, have been consumed in its progress, and trees of righteousness, strong and fair as the cedars of Lebanon, have risen in their stead to beautify the land, and refresh successive generations of Zion’s pilgrims.

At the same time, and by the movements of the same spirit, the arm of despotism was unnerved in our father-land; the

chains that enthralled conscience were loosed ; the liberty werewith Christ makes his people free was proclaimed ; the measures adopted to crush the vitalities of religion, gave them fresh energy ; and the result of the fearful struggle, was the firmer establishment of the true principles of civil and religious freedom ; the wider extension of vital godliness, and the stronger hold of the primitive institutions of Christianity, on the leading minds of protestant Europe.

But I may not further follow the movements of Divine Providence, however alluring the theme, and instructive the lessons it inculcates. And, surely, enough has been said on a topic so familiar, to evince the folly of despising “ the day of small things.”

We are to illustrate the same point,

III. From the operations of the Holy Spirit.

“ The wind bloweth where it listeth ; thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” The day of the sinner’s conversion is a “ day of small things.” It comes not by human observation, more than by human power. The course of the Holy Spirit is marked by phenomena that no man can explain, and attended by an energy that all created power cannot resist. Commonly, overwhelming convictions of guilt and danger are poured upon the mind ; tears flow from eyes that never wept for sin before—and tremblings seize the frame that, till now, never shook at heaven’s deepest toned thunders. But, sometimes, the sinner is gently drawn from the pathway of death by an unseen influence which he cannot comprehend ; his eyes are gradually opened on the number and aggravations of his sins, and ere he is aware, he cries, “ Lord ! save, or I perish.”

But, whether as the Lord passes by, a strong wind rends the mountains, and breaks the rocks in pieces—or the earth quakes, or the fire breaks forth and wraps the heavens in a blaze of terror—HE is neither in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire ; but, there is a still, small voice, that succeeds, and there is the Lord, there the wonder working, the transforming spirit of our God.

When the sinner's attention is arrested, and his eye turned upon the neglected Bible, and his ear opened to sacred instruction, and his tongue first moves in prayer—is it not a “day of small things”? When he carries his head bowed like the bulrush, and tremblingly inquires of those he meets, the way to Zion, weeping as he goes—is it not a “day of small things”? And even when he lifts up his head and rejoices, saying to all about him, “I have found Him whom my soul loveth”—“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul”—is it not a “day of small things”? Nay—and while on his pilgrimage, he now meets with temptations that overpower him, and then with encouragements that sustain him—when to-day he exclaims, “the Lord hath forsaken me”—and to-morrow sings, “the Lord will provide”—when subject to ceaseless alternations of hope and fear, of confidence and doubt, of joy and sorrow, of triumph and defeat, is it not “a day of small things”?

But who shall despise it? Follow him to Jordan's verge, and hear from his lips the Conqueror's song—“O death where is thy sting—O grave where is thy victory—thanks be to God who giveth me the victory, through Jesus Christ my Lord!” Heaven is in his heart. His chains fall off. He rises on angel's wings to the presence of Jesus, and dwells in the sunshine of his face forever and ever.

What, O what is wealth! What its riches, honors, pleasures—what its gay dreams and flitting visions—its splendid promises and strong enchantments! Are they not blended with poverty and shame—with disappointment and woe? Naught is reality and bliss below the sun. All is vanity and vexation. Life is “a day of small things.” Let the Christian look upward, where all is reality, perfection, happiness and love, without mixture or end—one bright eternal day filled up with service exalted, holy, and lasting as eternity!

That is the day on which every eye should fasten. That the purity and bliss in which each heart should centre. Still, let not life, “the day of small things,” be despised. It is the day of the Holy Spirit's mighty operations. “The day of grace,”

——— “and mortals may
Secure the blessings of the day.”

Despise not a world where preparation is made for heaven; where God has displayed the wonders of his wisdom and power; where the Lord of life and glory has dwelt in human flesh; and where alone the miserable sinner is transformed into the image of God, and taught to begin the song of Moses and the Lamb!

Religion revives in a community. Many are pricked in the heart, and inquire, "Men and brethren! what shall we do?" Truth is clothed with power. Converts are multiplied. Saints are strengthened. Prayer and praise flow forth in rising columns of sweet incense toward the throne of God. As the trees of the forest bend before the rushing mighty wind, so the whole community bows before the breath of the Lord passing over the valley of the slain.

And are not ALL, thenceforward, found rejoicing in the Lord? O that it were so! But, alas! "the wicked one cometh," and catcheth away the descending influence. Tribulation ariseth and many are offended. The cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word in other hearts, and it becomes unfruitful. A few only bring forth fruit to the glory of God—while the many enter anew into a covenant with death, and confirm their agreement with hell.

Even the day of revival is a "day of small things," though it is the work of the Holy Spirit—and there is in it, the putting forth of a power, stronger than that which shakes the mountains, and scatters the everlasting hills;—yet, compared with the day when the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and when the great multitude, that no man can number, shall be gathered from every kindred, and tongue, and nation, upon Mount Zion, it is but the faint light of eventide, before the full blaze of day—the glimmer of the twinkling star, that sits solitary amid the clouds, compared with the effulgence of meridian sun!

It was a "day of small things" when the manger of Bethlehem lodged the infant Jesus—when Joseph, with the child and his mother, fled into Egypt—when in Capernaum, for thirty years, he was known as "the carpenter's son"—when only two disciples followed him; and when, later still, all forsook him and fled—and when on the cross, he gave up the

ghost and died ! And by millions, those days were despised—but the results of them, who shall declare—nay, who can conceive, till that great day shall arrive, when the same Jesus shall descend in the clouds of heaven with the sound of a trumpet, and gather all nations before him, and divide them according to their character, and say to those on the right hand, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world”—and to those on the left hand, “Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Up to this point, we trace the operations of the Holy Spirit. By him is implanted, and nourished in the soul of man, the germ of eternal life, during “the day of small things” on earth. By him it is matured and perfected, in that great day of final decision, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

REFLECTIONS.

1. To every christian this life is a “day of small things.” His knowledge is small. Even of his own heart he knows little, and has occasion to cry daily, “Search me O God, and try me—and lead me in the way that is everlasting.” Of the hearts of others, he knows less, though yet enough to insure his assent to the humiliating truth, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Of God he knows something, as also of the mysteries of redemption—of the loftiness of heaven, and the depths of hell ; but upon subjects like these, his largest thoughts are only as motes dancing in the sunbeams—embryo conceptions of a vastness, that even an angel’s mind cannot comprehend.

His faith is small. He believes, but has occasion always to pray, “Lord ! help mine unbelief.” Instead of looking at things unseen and eternal, he looks at those which are seen and temporal ; and because events occur, not in the order and manner of his own choice, and are adverse to his wishes, he staggers at the promises of God, and exclaims, “All things are against me.”

His love is small. Sincere it is, but mingled with selfishness, and interrupted in its aspirings toward God, by the intervention of various unhallowed passions.

His obedience is small. He aims, indeed, to do all things for the glory of God. But self interest blinds him—temptation overcomes him—the world deceives him, and he who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, leads him captive.

His usefulness is small. When he would do good, evil is present with him; and oftener still, when he might do good, he is prevented by covetousness, or fear of false imputations. His conceptions of duty are too vague—his views of privilege too limited, and his resolutions to make his solitary influence felt wide as the world, too weak and evanescent.

His hope is small. While it should be an anchor to his soul, both sure and stedfast, founded on the promise of God, confirmed by an oath—too often, it is like the frail bark tossed on the mountain wave, or dashed upon the quicksands of gloomy doubt and superstitious fear.

His consolation is small; and well it may be, while hope is too weak to “comfort the heart, and establish it in every good word and work.” Can the fruition of God, and his promises, be full, while knowledge does not increase, nor faith gather strength, nor love abound, nor obedience become more cheerful and constant, nor usefulness more marked and extensive?

Still—though it be a “day of small things” to the christian, let him not despise it—nor rebel against the purposes of God—nor repine under his providence; but rather let him rejoice in the Lord always—and give thanks that grace has distinguished him from the multitudes who still live without God and without hope in the world, and put within him the spirit that exclaims—“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

2. It is often a day of small things with churches.

Sometimes their members are few. Time was, when a single family embosomed the religion of the world; and the time now is, when but a small portion of any community

avouch the Lord Jehovah to be their God. The many "say to the gold, thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence;" or else they plunge into the streams of guilty pleasure, and drink, and drink again, and rise no more. But while few come to the solemn feasts of the Lord, and the multitude inquire, "Who will show us any good"—it is a "day of small things."

Sometimes the spirit of piety declines, and they who profess to be, "not of the world even as Christ was not of the world," become fearfully conformed to the spirit, the maxims, and the fashions of the confessed enemies of the Cross. Their graces no longer shine; their prayers are no longer importunate; their vigilance yields to remissness, and their activity to indolence. Then are they convicted of walking no more with Jesus, or at best, of following him afar off; and it is a "day of small things" with the Church.

Sometimes divisions and alienations occur. One is of Paul, and another of Apollos, and a third of Cephas—all impatient with the imperfections of their brethren, and ready to sacrifice the spirit of love on the altar of pride, and to fan the flames of envy and distrust by which the sacrifice is consumed. But when brethren fall out by the way, and thus diminish their own strength, and furnish their enemies with weapons for their destruction, it must be "a day of small things."

Sometimes discipline is neglected. The laws of God's house are not maintained; the ordinances are defiled by unclean hands; the faith once delivered to the saints is corrupted; members are admitted without due examination, and retained without rebuke for their sins. It is then, a "day of small things."

Sometimes the ministry is taken away. Where a faithful ministry is maintained, error shrinks from notoriety, vice cowers, virtue stands erect, and truth triumphs. What Ezekiel was to the valley of dry bones with God's commission in his hand, that is every faithful minister to his people, whether a savor of life unto life or of death unto death, yet a sweet savor unto God. Take such a ministry away, and a "day of small things" follows. And,

Sometimes the influence of the Holy Spirit is suspended. He alone convinces man of sin, of righteousness and of judgment—strips off the veil of unbelief—takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. Withdraw his influence, and the voice of love falls powerless on the ear; dangers cease to alarm, and glories to allure; and in vain is the arm of man stretched out to snatch him from the precipice on which he stands—a precipice that overhangs the world of death. Then too, it is a “day of small things.”

Still it is a day not to be despised, but rather to be remembered with weeping, and with supplications—with the rending of the head, and a cordial return to God and duty.

3. When the claims of “the day of small things” are promptly met, a more happy and glorious day will surely follow.

Those claims are obvious. They are imperative, and equally binding on all. They admit of no demur. There is watchfulness and prayer; there is liberality and self denial; there is harmony and love; there is zeal and activity—all to be maintained.

No man can innocently sleep amid the cries of an infant church, or the sighings of a decaying one. God calls to labor. He demands wrestling prayer. Nor will such prayer be offered in vain. I have known a church reduced to two solitary females, and denied the ministry for eleven years; heart-broken and desolate, they met week after week, and year after year, to weep before the Lord, and beg relief. Their prayers were heard—a man of God was sent them—their house of worship was repaired—the church was enlarged, and for twenty years, with scarce an interruption, they have sat under the droppings of the sanctuary, and rejoiced in frequent accessions to their numbers.

Self-denial is demanded. “Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob,” said David. In “the day of small things” to which our text refers, Jerusalem was the most exposed point,

and the most uncomfortable position in all the land; but there were those that “willingly offered themselves” to encounter its perils and endure its toils—and the people blessed them. And how willingly did the princes, and the captains, and the rulers of the king’s work, nay, and all the people in the days of David, offer their silver and gold, that an house might be built for the Lord! The offering was acceptable to Heaven, and met its reward.

The days of self-denial and liberality like this, are not yet passed away. And blessed is the man who takes up his cross, and denies himself the luxurious ease of religious privilege requiring no sacrifice, and casts in his lot with those who are toiling, and bearing reproach, and casting their bread on the waters, that they may repair the desolations of Zion, and multiply the trophies of victorious grace. The Lord will bless them out of Zion, and send them light from his habitation.

Harmony of feeling and “love that many waters cannot quench,” among those who seek the prosperity of Zion are indispensable to their success. A dogmatical and censorious spirit can never be innocently allowed to enter their counsels, nor control their movements. Love knows no want that it does not attempt to relieve, nor sorrow that it does not desire to assuage, nor guilt that it would not gladly remove. “It hopeth all things, endureth all things, believeth all things,” and never wearies in its labors. On friends and foes, its influence is alike happy. Often has the lighted torch been quenched in the tears of the persecutor himself—and the sword been returned bloodless to its scabbard when it has been seen how christians love one another. And wherever this love prevails among the brethren—“the day of small things” will shortly give place to the day of hallowed triumph, for the glory of the Lord will descend upon Zion, and he will look down from his holy habitation to bless his people Israel.

And then, of the activity and zeal that are demanded in these circumstances, I need not speak. If it be “good to be always zealously affected in a good thing”—if it be wise to

“do with our might whatever our hands find to do” then it is good to devote every power we possess to the spiritual improvement of those about us—the zeal of God’s house may well eat us up—the effort to rescue our fellow sinners from perdition and bring them within the courts of the Lord’s house, and excite in them the spirit of anxious enquiry, and lead them to the Lamb of God, may well task all our energies. These are the labors of Heaven. Earth knows no other, comparable with them in dignity and honor. And yet the humblest of Christ’s disciples may perform them and reap the rewards of those who turn many to righteousness.

CONCLUSION.

Beloved Brother: Is this to you a “day of small things”? You do not despise it. As God honors it—so you will bless the Providence that makes you the instrument of converting it into a day of good tidings, to all who shall know that here a church is established, to reflect the glory of Emanuel, and a minister of the sanctuary ordained to publish salvation, and proclaim unto Zion, “Thy God reigneth.” You have before you a great work—and as good as it is great. With the hand of the Lord upon you, you will turn again the captivity of Zion, as the streams in the south. Though you sow in tears you shall reap in joy; for, doubtless, whoever goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Have you any misgivings? lay them on the bosom of Jesus! Have you any fears? give them to the winds of heaven! Have you strong desires for success? carry them to the foot of the eternal throne!

My brother! trusting in God alone, and fearlessly sustained by the little flock committed to your charge, you can never be confounded. “The day of small things” shall be succeeded by days of triumph over every combination of difficulties, and the fruits of that triumph shall meet you in yonder world of glory, where the crown is prepared for him who fights the good fight, and endures to the end.

To the dear brethren of this church and congregation—I can only say, “Courage!” It may be to you a “day of small things,” but like the morning star, it is the harbinger of a day full of splendor—to mingle its beams hereafter with those of the day that shall reveal the brightness of the throne of God and the Lamb, to the wondering eyes of heaven’s myriads, forever.

For what are you organized, but to make the Gospel the power of God unto the salvation of the multitudes around you—to impart to your fellow sinners that pearl which cannot be gotten for gold, nor purchased with silver? And why call you this servant of God to take the oversight of you, unless that he may guide your movements, and stimulate your zeal, and strengthen your faith in the promises of God. You will never abandon him. You will never dishearten him. He shall dwell among you without fear, nor know the sorrows of Paul, among the Galatians, for their defections from the truth. Love him for his work’s sake. Cherish him for his master’s sake. Obey him for your own sake, and the welfare of Zion.

Brethren—You have resolved here to labor for God. Hold that resolution sacred; and let it become strong and heroic as that which bore the princes of Judah onward to build the walls of Jerusalem—and carried the Apostle of the Gentiles fearlessly through all perils—and still bears away the self-devoted missionary to realms of pagan darkness, that he may convert the desert into a fruitful field, and cause the wilderness to blossom as the rose; and then shall the blessing of the Lord come down upon you, “as the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion;” and all that go by shall say, “The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord.”

With that resolve in your hearts—and your hands full of the works of faith and labors of love, and your eyes directed always to the God of your salvation, your enterprise cannot fail. Your desire shall be accomplished; and in view of the multitudes thronging these courts of the Lord’s house, from Sabbath to Sabbath, you shall exclaim, “Who are these, that

fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows!" And, then, when your work shall be done, and He whom you serve, shall call you to "go up higher," you shall meet among the ransomed of the Lord, those for whom you toil and sorrow now, and, with them, sit down in the palace of the Great King, to join their songs, and share the glories of all who are faithful to the death.

